

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8560

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 14071

STADIS////////////////////////////////

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN, US

SUBJ: FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS

REF: STATE 234261

1. EMBASSY HAS LITTLE RELIABLE INFORMATION TO SUPPLEMENT THE ESTIMATES PROVIDED EARLIER ON PRISONERS INCLUDING MP'S UNDER DETENTION. IN NEW DELHI'S 9115 WE NOTED HOME MINISTER'S JUNE 20 CALCULATION THAT THERE WERE TWO PERSONS UNDER POLITICAL DETENTION FOR EVERY 100,000 PERSONS IN THE POPULATION, OR APPROXIMATELY 12,000. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ASSESS THIS FIGURE WITHOUT KNOWING THE BASIS FOR DEFINING "POLITICAL." NEW DELHI'S 13674 REPEATED A MESSAGE FROM CONGEN BOMBAY WHICH GAVE A FIGURE OF 1973 FOR MISA POLITICAL DETAINEES AND 1951 FOR OTHER DETAINEES FOR MAHARASHTRA STATE ALONE, AND MAHARASHTRA PROBABLY IS NOT BY ANY MEANS THE STATE WITH THE MOST DETAINEES. IN DELHI AS OF THE END OF AUGUST, THERE WERE 748 PRISONERS IN JAIL OF WHOM 189 WERE "POLITICAL." WE CANNOT REFINE OUR FIGURES BEYOND THOSE SUGGESTED IN NEW DELHI 6264 LAST APRIL -- PERHAPS 50,000 TO 80,000 PERSONS UNDER DETENTION FOR SOME FORM OF POLITICAL OR EMERGENCY-RELATED ACTIVITY, OF WHOM SOMEWHAT UNDER 20,000 CAN UNDER SOME FAIRLY CLOSE DEFINITION BE DESCRIBED AS "POLITICAL". THIS FIGURE MAY HAVE RISEN OR FALLEN SOMEWHAT SINCE THEN, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT WE SUSPECT WITHIN A 10 PERCENT RANGE ON EITHER

SIDE. FYI: AS OF THE END OF JUNE, THE BRITISH ESTIMATES WERE 50,000 TO 60,000 "POLITICAL PRISONERS" WHICH WE THINK IS TOO HIGH. END FYI.

2. MPS UNDER ARREST WERE DESCRIBED IN MID-JULY IN NEW DELHI'S A-210. THIS REMAINS OUR BEST ASSESSMENT AT THIS POINT AND CONTINUES TO BE AS OF MID-SEPTEMBER: 30 IN JAIL, SIX ON PAROLE.

3. ON TORTURE AND MALTREATMENT, WE WOULD RECOMMEND SUBSTITUTING FOR THE FOURTH SENTENCE IN THE SUGGESTED DRAFT (REFTEL PARA 2) THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE "HOWEVER WE HAVE NO BASIS FOR ASSESSING HOW WIDESPREAD THIS IS." WE THINK WE WANT TO WALK CAREFULLY AROUND THIS ONE AND FELT THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE SUGGESTED MAY HAVE BEEN A BIT TOO DEFENSIVE OF THE INDIANS. WE WOULD REVISE THE FINAL SENTENCE TO READ, "WE HAVE NO INDICATION IT IS AN OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED PRACTICE IN INDIA."
SAXBE

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